



# *Success Story*

**BUFFALO DISTRICT OFFICE** District Director, Franklin J. Sciortino

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## **SBA, ESD STEP Grant Helps Harper International Build Relationships**

**Thermal Processing Company finds Success in Paris Exhibition**

**BUFFALO, NY** – The U.S. Small Business Administration’s State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP) Grant program has enabled Buffalo-based Company, Harper International access to vital opportunities in Paris, France.

The STEP program, authorized under the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010, has two objectives: 1) increase the number of small businesses that begin to export and 2) increase the value of exports for small businesses that currently export.

Harper International partnered with New York State’s ESD and was the recipient of a \$5,000 STEP Grant in 2016. STEP grant funds allowed the company to enter and expand their presence in the international marketplace.

“Paris, France is host to the primary exhibition in the world for carbon fiber,” said Diana Robbins, Harper International Vice President of Marketing. “This particular trade exhibition is a key step to building relationships for our company. It helps us to facilitate our long sales cycle.”

Harper offers high temperature thermal process systems for customers in advanced materials markets, with installations worldwide from lab scale to complete production lines. The company designs and manufactures highly customized furnace, oven and kiln systems for a range of high temperature processing applications including calcination, graphitization, carburization, oxidation, purification, pyrolysis, sintering and more.

In New York State, Empire State Development has received STEP grant funding for the last four years and continues to offer funds through the STEP Global NY Export Grant Program to qualifying small businesses. Erin M. Cole, Senior Vice President, ESD Global NY says, “the program has helped hundreds of NYS small businesses start to export or increase their global exports. We are extremely proud of this accomplishment and look forward to future STEP grant funding.”

“We are also working with ESD to locate additional international representatives,” said Robbins. “It is very important for us to maintain our international presence by working with partners who can bring expertise from their geographic region and support us in relationship development during our lengthy sales process.”

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“Diana Robbins encourages other small businesses to utilize the STEP program. “The SBA’s STEP promotion program was a great help for Harper International to be able to participate in this trade exhibition, allowing us to have one-on-one business meetings and meet with potential new business partner companies from around the world.”

“Strengthening the nation’s economy through substantial increases in U.S. exports is a top priority for the SBA,” said Franklin Sciortino, SBA Buffalo district director. “This is a unique partnership between SBA and Empire State Development where sharing resources allows small and medium sized businesses increase exports and succeed in the global market.”

Information about the STEP grant program can be obtained at  
[http://esd.ny.gov/international/STEP\\_NYS.html](http://esd.ny.gov/international/STEP_NYS.html).

Small business owners interested in exporting their products and services are encouraged to work with SBA resource partners like the Small Business Development Centers, Women’s Business Centers and SCORE, as well as the U.S. Export Assistance Centers that are available to assist small businesses that are interested in exporting. Small business owners looking for additional information on exporting should visit [www.export.gov](http://www.export.gov) and [www.SBA.gov/oit](http://www.SBA.gov/oit). For additional information on USEACs, visit <http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/internationaltrade/useac/index.html>.

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